

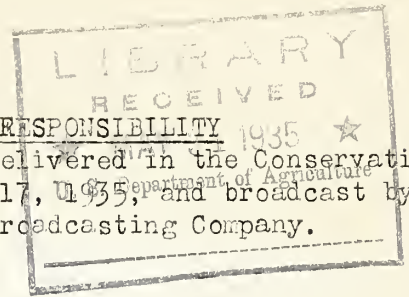
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FORESTRY - A PRIVATE AS WELL AS A PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

A radio talk by E. E. Carter, Forest Service, delivered in the Conservation Day program, National Farm and Home Hour, Friday, May 17, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 61 stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.



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Forestry is both a public and a private responsibility, but the forest lands in private ownership are the key to the problem. Naturally so, for three-fourths of all forest lands -- and four-fifths of all commercial forest lands -- are now privately owned. By comparison, only rims, remnants and a few museum pieces are in public ownership and management.

Under such conditions, it is no wonder that 95% of our domestic lumber and forest products have come from privately owned forest lands. Or -- since a virile lumber industry has always been financed and operated on a quick liquidation basis -- that most forest lands in private ownership should have been ruthlessly exploited.

In this process, incalculable damage has been done; the Nation's social and economic structure has been weakened. How? Let me tell you by relating one incident which is typical of thousands.

Not many years ago, a sawmill started at the junction of two timber-clad streams. A railroad came in. A town sprang up. Homes, stores, hotels, schools, and churches were built. Jobs were plentiful. The industry was supporting a population of 5000 or more.

But this mill was too big for the timber supply. So in a few years the forest disappeared. The sawmill shut down. Repeated fires swept through stumps and slashings. The town suffered so that insurance companies would no longer write policies there. Inhabitants, deprived of their livelihood, moved away. Seven room houses, with steam heat and plumbing, went on the auction block at \$35. There were no takers. The high school was offered for sale. It, too, went begging. Finally the State bought these cut-over barrens and spent more public moneys to help repair the tragedy. Meanwhile, the town is practically dead.

Almost one-third the total land area of the continental United States is forest land. The public interest requires that -- instead of being mined, then abandoned -- this forest empire be so used that it may continuously contribute, with some sense of security and stability, to the permanent support of its fair share of the nation's population. Public interest extends, therefore, far beyond the rims and remnants which are today in public ownership. The viewpoint, now accepted by leaders in the lumber industry, is that a definite public interest is vested in all forest lands; that in solving the forest problem the private owner as well as the public must share in opportunities and responsibilities, both.

What are these responsibilities? Briefly, that of industry is to change from a suicidal to a sustained yield basis of operation; that of the public is to help make this change possible.

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Toward meeting these responsibilities, some progress has been made. In 1932, for example, private owners spent or contributed \$1,300,000, and Federal and State governments made \$4,800,000 available -- for fire protection on privately owned forest lands. This covered less than one-half the forest lands so owned.

Again, in 1934, the lumber industry made certain definite commitments under the conservation provisions of its Code. These commitments, contingent upon additional public aid to help bear the ultimate load, included adoption of minimum woods practice rules, agreement to observe them, and indirect though definite recognition of the necessity to practice sustained yield forest management if the intent of the industry's conservation commitments were to be fulfilled.

Although no new major national legislation has yet been introduced, the public has taken definite steps to carry out its part of this program. Federal aid in fire protection has been augmented by \$75,000,000 worth of fire protective work by men in CCC camps on private forest lands. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation has extended credits to some 134 lumber concerns. With nearly \$2,000,000 emergency funds, control work on white pine blister rust was continued and intensified; other emergency funds purchased nearly 8 million acres of privately owned forest lands for addition to the National Forest system. And the President has urged all State Governors to devise remedies for such vital matters as taxation and tax delinquency of forest lands.

Credit is due lumber industry leaders for voluntarily agreeing to keep forest lands productive, with sustained yield as the ultimate goal. But most of the industry is still operating on the old basis, draining the remaining reservoirs of virgin timber with the usual and inevitable results. This is discouraging, although it must be realized that old habits and pioneer psychology can only gradually be changed; that the rank and file of a huge, virile industry may not yet believe that some measure of private profits must, if necessary, be sacrificed to the public welfare.

Yet the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service has pointed out, for more than 30 years, the need for transfer from a suicidal to a permanent, sustained yield basis of forest management. This transfer can not, in the interest of both the public and the industry, be postponed. For added delays may retard restoration of that public confidence which the lumber industry must have if it is to function adequately in the new forest economy.

What is this new economy? One of plenty rather than scarcity; of stability rather than instability; of permanence rather than impermanence for forest industries and for that family and community life, the very existence of which depends upon permanent forests as the source of raw material for those supporting industries.

This permanence extends far beyond the confines of wood using industries and of the forest itself. Including recreation and game, it reaches out to the cities, the urban, and the agricultural sections of our country.

For forests not only supply building materials, boxes, and paper. They help prevent erosion by water and wind; help -- in ways which will be discussed in the next of this series of informal talks on that part of the National Resources Board report which has to do with Forestry in Land Use Planning -- to keep the soil at home.